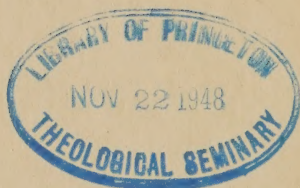


Sockman - The Lord's Prayer

3V
33
S62
.947



BV 233 .S62 1947
Sockman, Ralph Washington,
1889-
The Lord s prayer

The Lord's Prayer





The Lord's Prayer

An Interpretation

BY ✓

RALPH W. SOCKMAN



THE PILGRIM PRESS
BOSTON

This edition designed by Charles R. Capon

COPYRIGHT 1947
BY
THE PILGRIM PRESS

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN,
HALLOWED BE THY NAME. THY KING-
DOM COME. THY WILL BE DONE IN
EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN. GIVE US
THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD. AND FOR-
GIVE US OUR TRESPASSES, AS WE FOR-
GIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST
US. AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTA-
TION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL: FOR
THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE
POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOREVER AND
EVER. AMEN.





THE LORD'S PRAYER

THE Lord's Prayer is the most important of all Christian documents. Almost every Christian child commits it to memory. Almost every service of Christian worship includes it. Yet it comes trippingly on the tongue and its clauses fall from our lips without catching hold of our hearts. Its very familiarity has dulled our spirits to the fulness of its meaning.

Pause therefore, and in your time of reading examine the prayer anew. Follow the movements of its thought and catch the varied shades of its meaning. Through its petitions one enters into communion with our Heavenly Father.

"And it came to pass that as he was praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said unto him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as

John also taught his disciples.' And he said unto them, 'When ye pray, say: Our Father.' "

We make bold to address thee, O God, as thy son Jesus hath taught us. In our homes we have learned to know our fathers and to count on their compassion. We have seen how they love and serve, how they work and suffer to give good things to their children. And we look to thee as the One who gave us our fathers and from whom they learned fatherhood. When we think of the blessings which thou hast bestowed upon us — the bounties of the good earth, the marvels of mind and body, the beauties of nature beyond the bare necessities, the fidelity of friends, the love and laughter of little children, when memory adds the treasures of the past to thy gifts of the present, we are led to call thee our Father. It is the highest and dearest name we know, embracing both father and mother and embodying both justice and mercy.

While we have not looked upon thy face with our eyes, we have known One so holy and altogether lovely that we believe him

when he said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Ever since that One walked the earth, worked here with his hands, lived among the lowly, and laid down his life on a cross, we feel that we know what thou, O God, art like. Like his followers of the first century, we behold thy glory and goodness in the face of Jesus Christ. And so we draw near to thee with faith and without fear as children come home to a father. Having been taught that thou dost count the falling sparrows and look after the lost lambs, we somehow feel that no one of our lives is too little for thy concern, but that each of us is precious in thy sight, even as every child is dear to a parent. In love and trust we lay our petitions before thee, saying, "Our Father."

But Jesus thy son taught us to say, "*Our Father which art in Heaven.*" We look up and remember that thou hast a whole universe on thy hands. The earth is thine and the fulness thereof and all that dwell therein. The heavens declare thy glory and the firmament showeth thy handiwork. When we consider the moon and the stars which thou

hast ordained, who are we that thou shouldst be mindful of us? Where were we when thou didst lay the foundations of the earth? And why should we presume to ask for thy personal care when thou art the keeper of the seas and the sky? How canst thou control the stars and also keep thine eye on our little bodies? The question is too great for us.

Yet when we remember that thou hast made every star to differ from every other star and every leaf to be distinct from every other leaf and every man's fingertips to be so much his own that he can be found wherever he is hidden, it is not so hard to believe that each of us is known and watched by thee. Thy son was called the Good Shepherd who knew his sheep by name, and when we think of him we feel confident of thy never-ceasing care. Thou dost seem so intimate in thy nearness and yet so infinite in thy greatness.

When we look up to thee as "Our Father which art in heaven," the mystery of thy love and the majesty of thy power impel us to add, "*Hallowed be thy name.*" Like the devout Hebrew children of old, we almost

feel that thy name is too sacred to be spoken with our lips. We would be still and know that thou art God. Our souls are hurt when we hear thy name profaned by being taken lightly and in vain as some do in cheap and vulgar language. But we do long to talk with thee in our lonely hours and thy name does sound lovely on the lips of little children. We would be reverent toward thee and yet not removed from thee.

We bow in awe before thy mighty arm which sendeth forth the lightnings and scattereth the islands in the sea. Thy ways are higher than our ways as the heavens are high above the earth. So we laud and magnify thy glorious name, ever more praising thee and saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of thy glory." Yet through thy greatness so far above us shines thy fatherly goodness so near unto us that our awe is melted into reverence and we pray, "Hallowed be thy name."

When we turn from the stars which swing so perfectly in the heavens and consider the chaos in the movements of men, we are aware that thou hast given man to have

dominion over a world which he cannot master in his own strength. We know that thou desirest also to sway the hearts of men because thy son Jesus bade us to pray, "*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*"

We have been erring children and have run our courses in wayward paths. Thou hast given us a bounteous earth and we have wasted its substance in riotous wars. Thou hast made thy human creatures of one blood to dwell as one family on all the face of the earth and we have set ourselves to killing our brothers. Thou hast made our bodies to be the temples of thy Holy Spirit and we have marred them with low temptations and dark deeds. Our stubborn wills have been unwilling to receive thy kingdom, yet our hope of its coming does not die though the earth has been so recently drenched in blood and rumors of wars are still heard in the land; for through the torn and tangled threads of our troubled lives we have glimpsed the pattern of thy kingdom. We have caught intimations of what the good life can be if we would live as Jesus lived.

Thy son taught us that the kingdom of heaven can be within us, and we have had days when we felt it so. We have had times when the peace which passeth all understanding stole into our lives to calm our doubts and fears, times when our noisy selfish strivings were silenced in the joy of serving thee, times when our stubborn wills yielded to the sway of thy sovereign love and our little rebellious souls found harmony and happiness in loyalty to thy spirit. Oh, yes, Our Father, bad as the world may seem to be, we have had our good moments; and in our highest hours we have found sufficient evidence of thy kingdom within us to sustain our faith in thy son's promise of its coming around us.

Like the Christians of the first century, we see not yet all things put under the feet of Christ as King, but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, for out of every crisis and after every war his figure rises more revered and adored. Men call him a dreamer and turn from his precepts as impractical, but out of the wreckage of their man-made plans they rise to see that in Christ is the

way, the truth, and the life. Brute strength scorns the cross of Jesus as a weapon of weakness, but when wars have wrought their worst, we wake up to realize that thy redeeming love is the one power that never faileth. Because all other roads lead to ruin, we have faith to pray, "Thy kingdom come," believing that in their lostness men will at last look toward the light.

We human beings seem so perverse that we persist in learning the hard way; but through tribulation, peril, famine, and sword we are learning that nothing can separate us from thy love as revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Slowly and never perfectly, but yet surely and steadily, even governments are beginning to see that peace on earth can come only to men of good will and that the kingdoms of this world can endure only as their rule is fashioned after thy righteousness.

And Our Father, as we pray for thy kingdom to come, grant us the grace to surrender our wills to thy will. Make our vision clear to see what thy wish is and our conscience clean to do it. May we never from love of ease decline the call of duty, nor for fear of

shame follow the crowd. We claim to be comrades of the Christ who in his Gethsemane prayed, "Not my will but thine be done." Search our hearts and strengthen our courage that we may be able to say the same when our choices are hard and the shadows are deep.

We know that we cannot ask for thy will to be done in the hours of crisis and in the wide affairs of earth unless we allow its work to begin in the smallest circles of our daily living. Keep us so constantly in thy company that we shall think thy thoughts after thee and learn to like the things which thou dost like. We would be faithful in our good intentions until they become fashioned into good habits and duty is lifted into desire. Not as idle watchers but as willing workers together with thee do we pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

And now if we are to serve thee, Our Father, as fellow workers in bringing thy kingdom to earth, we must have strength; and for this we ask, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" We believe that all our needs

are of concern to thee, for thou hast made us with these hungers and thirsts. Thy son came that we might have life and have it abundantly; and as the Great Physician, he ministered both to the bodies and minds of men. He reminded us how thou dost feed the fowls of the air and clothe the grass of the fields: and he said that if we would seek first thy kingdom, our bodies would find enough for their needs through thy bounteous goodness. Help us so to set our hearts on thy goods that our hands may be guided toward the true goods of life and material possessions may cease to be the chief cause of our worry and strife.

When we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," we do not expect thee to supply all our desires, for in our selfishness and shortsightedness we so often wish for more than would be good for us. We ask only that thou wilt give us what we need, believing that, if we seek thy good and the good of all, there will be goods enough for all.

Father, thy son has told us that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. We would obey him and not borrow troubles from our

tomorrows nor fret ourselves about the future. We trust thy promise that as our days so shall our strength be, and we believe that thou wilt not burden us beyond what we are able to bear. And so we now ask only for that which will sustain us in doing worthily what this day demands.

When we pray for our daily bread, we mean more than material good, for Jesus reminded us that man doth not live by bread alone. We have learned how true that is, for we recall times when our bodies were full and our hearts were empty, and other times when we were poor in substance and happy in spirit. The daily bread which we crave from thee must be food for our souls as well as for our bodies. And if we have lost our spiritual hunger, wilt thou arouse our appetite for the true, the beautiful, the good, and restore our taste for the simple and the pure. Give us this day, O God, enough to live for as well as enough to live on, for we need faith great enough to give us purpose, and hope strong enough to give us heart, and love rich enough to give us comradeship.

But as we pray for our daily bread, we are painfully mindful that because we have not put thy kingdom first, multitudes of thy children are in misery, want, and sin. Wilt thou, then, "*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*"

We all belong to thy world-wide human family and even the best of us must bear some responsibility for the sins which beset society. If thy pure son, Jesus of Nazareth, suffered himself to be baptized for the sins of his people, how much more should we feel guilt for the ungodliness around us. We have gone with the crowd in its compromises. We have allowed personal comfort and private interest to keep us silent when we should have spoken out. We have permitted lies to pass current in our presence when we could have stopped them with the truth. We have fixed our gaze on great social evils and failed to do the duties next to us. We have hated and helped to kill the sinners in other lands and then kept their sins. We have let our consciences sleep while evil has become enthroned in high places and whole races have been wronged and nations

have drifted into war. Father, forgive us for our share in public sins.

And when we look at those nearest to us, we fear that we have trespassed on their lives. May it be that there is a husband or wife for whose personality we have lacked kindly consideration, or a child for whose opinions we have not had charitableness, or an aging parent for whose welfare we have not had concern, or a friend for whose privacy we have not had respect? May it be that in our haste we have failed to heed the hands reached out for help or spurned some generous offers of aid? May it be that in our pride we have scorched some humble soul with scorn, or by our gossip we have wounded another's reputation, or by our prejudice we have spread the spirit of ill will, or in our anger we have sent forth the sting which we cannot recall? May it be that with lustful look we have poisoned the beauty around us, or in our greed we have lowered the standards of honesty, or by our indulgence we have profaned bodies which are the temples of thy Holy Spirit?

Father, forgive us our open sins and our

secret faults. If any brother hath aught against us, lead us to him that we may be reconciled. If we have taken love's gifts for granted, let our thankfulness find ways of redeeming our thoughtlessness. If we have grown weary in well-doing and have disappointed the hopes we raised, forgive our failure to follow through and help us to finish what others rightfully expect of us.

We crave thy forgiveness, O God, for though we try to forget our sins, we cannot forgive ourselves. When we set our sins in the light of thy countenance, we do repent and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings. The remembrance of them is grievous unto us. But when we think of the hours we have wasted and the opportunities we have forfeited and the blessings we have received from those no longer present and the sacrifice made for us by thy well-beloved son, Jesus Christ our Lord, we know that we are too deeply in thy debt ever to repay. Only by faith in thy grace can we be saved. Only thy forgiving love can blot out our transgressions and restore our right relationship.

But, Our Father, thy son hath taught us

that we cannot get right with thee unless we forgive those who trespass against us. Grant us the spirit of forgiveness, that we may welcome to our hearts those we have locked out. Make us magnanimous, too big to be bothered by little insults or to be embittered by old grudges. Help us to be well-wishers for the best interests of all men, that with malice toward none and with charity for all, we may do the right as thou dost give us to see the right.

And, Our Father, as we pray for the forgiveness of our past trespasses, we think of tomorrow and also ask, "*Lead us not into temptation.*" We know that thou dost desire our welfare and that thou wouldst not test us with needless trials. When we pray for thy protection against temptation, we believe that we are sharing thy wish for our welfare. We would not presume on thy fatherly goodness by repeatedly and carelessly falling into sin because we can count on thy continuing forgiveness. Keep us mindful that pardon is not easy in a world of justice, that it cost thee a cross to forgive, that we must not treat it lightly.

Lead us, therefore, away from the temptation which caused us to fall yesterday. Help us to say no to the suggestion of evil before the substance of it appears. Let us not look in the direction of our old sins lest we may walk toward them in our weakness. Make keen our consciences that we may catch the scent of sin afar off and cause us to stop short of the place where temptations lie in wait for us. Guide our steps along the paths where we shall think of whatsoever things are true and honest and pure and lovely and of good report. Keep us so close to thee that evil may lose its lure, and take not thy hand from the helm of our lives lest we drift into the storms where desire or passion may prove too great for our strength.

But, Our Father, since thou hast created us free spirits and hast left us to make our choices in order that we may grow up as thy children, we needs must face some evils. We do not ask to be spared the test, but we do pray, "*Deliver us from evil.*"

Keep us from being overcome by the fear of evil before we fight it, and let not the number of wrongdoers hide from our eyes

the legion of those who love the right. Awaken us to the presence of sins which so often lurk in lovely places and hide behind the second best, but let us not spoil the good by imagining the bad or darken the light of faith with the shadows of suspicion. May we be so pure in our purposes that we shall not impugn the motives of others and may we count on their highest until we bring out their best.

We crave the confidence of him who long ago sang to thee, "I will fear no evil for thou art with me." When other helpers fail and comforts flee, may the sense of thy nearness lift us out of our loneliness and dispel the darkness of fear. We know that if thou art for us, nothing can long stand against us, for no weapon against thee shall prosper. We would remember that what happens to us matters not so much as what happens in us and that if our heart is fixed on thee, nothing can harm our real selves, for all things work together for good to them that love thee.

But, Our Father, we would be delivered from the evils which we ourselves do. In

our own strength we are not equal to the task of being good. The evil that we would not, that we do; and the good that we would, we do not. We are in bondage to sinful habits which we of ourselves cannot break. We are not able to call back the consequences of our past sins any more than we can recall our breath. We need thy help to cleanse the secret chambers of our minds, to pluck from our breasts the rooted sorrows, and to renew a right spirit within us. We are not so craven as merely to seek escape from the results of our wrongdoing, but we would be freed from the sins themselves. Break thou the power of concealed sin and set us free from the desires which defeat our good intent. Help us to overcome evil with good, that we may be more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Through that love which Christ showed toward us we are led to try again and again when temptation has laid us low. Thou hast given him unto us as a great High Priest who was tempted in all points even as we are, and yet without sin. We believe that thy son Jesus Christ is our Advocate with thee, ever-

more living to make intercession for us. If we are faithful to him, we know that we can face the future unashamed and unafraid. Therefore, through this same Jesus Christ, who ever reigneth with thee world without end, we pray, "*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*"

"*For thine is the kingdom.*" Though we rebel against thee, thou still dost reign. Though we deny thy power, thy scepter does not fall. Though we may doubt thy very being, thy laws uphold us while we question them. Though wayward and wicked we try to live without thee, thy rule of righteousness is within us and around us as the sun waits for the clouds and darkness to pass away.

"*And the power.*" The heathen rage and the kingdoms are moved, but thou dost count the nations as the small dust of the balance and taketh up the isles as a very little thing. We boast our strength and clash our arms but, when "The captains and the kings depart, still stands thine ancient sacrifice, an humble and a contrite heart." Though the love which lay in a manger and hung on a

cross looks weak, it is the force which lasts and never faileth in the end.

“And the glory.” When we behold thy greatness in all the earth, thy goodness which shineth through the shadows of sin, thy grace which redeemeth our lives from destruction, we are lost in wonder, love, and praise. Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations and art our hope of an eternal home. Therefore will we not fear though the paths of earthly glory lead but to the grave, for “Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory *forever and ever.*”

Date Due

MY 3-79	~~Oct 30~~		
	~~Nov 2 79~~		
JUN 8 '50	~~FEB 28 '74~~		
	~~MAY 20 '75~~		
FE 19 '51	~~MAY 26 '55~~		
JY 24 '51			
NOV 16 '54	1954		
APR 25 '56			
SEP 18 '56			
FEB 8 - '57			
FACULTY			
~~OCT 20 '58~~			
~~NOV 2 58~~			
JUL 7 '61			
~~JUL 21 '61~~			
~~MAR 20 '62~~			
~~MAR 30 '63~~			





Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01025 2668